



Frustrations With The Impoverished



Since moving to Seattle I have had the chance to think a lot about the initiative and about its ultimate effects on me and my actions. I am finally in a place where the rubber can really hit the road and I can actually begin carrying out the task of feeding the hungry and hopeless. The problem

is that I am having a really difficult time seeing anyone who is really hungry, but I am seeing a lot of people who are completely hopeless. So I am starting to get frustrated not about the situation, but about the people who find themselves in the midst of it.

Let me explain what I mean. Every night after work I take the #16 bus from Pike & 3rd back home to Wallingford and every night there is someone begging asking for something whether it be money for food or change for the bus...there is always something. Like tonight, one woman came up to me shaking a cup asking for change, when I asked her what it was for she said it was for the bus so I gave her one of my bus tokens. She took the bus token and went on her way...the frustrating thing was that she had more than enough change in the cup to make bus fare. But the really infuriating thing for me happened a few minutes later when a guy came by shaking a cup and looking for a quarter. When I asked him what it was for he said it was for the bus so I gave him one of my bus tokens. But instead of using the bus token he took his cup and began shaking it at the people standing right next to me!

I can be indulgent and can understand that sometimes people fall on hard times. I understand how the system works. But at some point in time you need to take responsibility for your own stuff and man up a little

Recent Posts

[Frustrations With The Impoverished](#)
[Interviews from RRVFP- Mary](#)
[Interviews from RRVFP- Sheila](#)
[Interviews from RRVFP- Deborah](#)
[Day 30-Failure](#)

 [Hunger News](#)

[President Clinton mentions ONE during Physicians for Peace award speech](#)
[Ken Buck and the need for regional stability in the world](#)
[Busy week for Hoosier ONE-ers](#)
[Technology and Africa collide at Apps4Africa contest](#)
[ONE to host panel at World Food Prize Symposium](#)

bit. There are tons of organizations in the city of Seattle (walk in shelters, food banks, soup kitchens, job placement and training programs) for people to take advantage of. But yet I see so many people littering about the streets begging for money from anyone. Tonight I reached the point where I was no longer angry with issue of hunger, I was angry at the people who use my anger and my compassion to get things from me. I am frustrated by people who cannot manage to do the right thing and who purposefully choose not to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. And what infuriates me most is that I want to shake these people and make them do the right thing, but I am powerless to change the way that anyone acts except myself.

July 31, 2008

Categories: [Uncategorized](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [3 Comments](#)

Interviews from RRVFP-Mary

Age: 39

In today's society, doctors and other medical professionals are often given impossible expectations to fill because people come to the doctor when they are in their greatest need. The struggle against death makes people desperate. Any hint of hesitance or confusion on the part of medical personnel has the potential to send a patient into a tailspin of horror and doubt. For a growing percentage of the population a different life and death struggle is playing itself out, but there is no way to cure this ailment quickly or easily.

Mary is one victim of this ailment. The day I met her, she had two kids in tow, both under the age of 10 and she was trying to shoulder a box filled with groceries. Mary, the two kids, and the box of groceries were all headed home to her 16 & 18 year olds when I asked her to sit down to talk to me. She considered it a moment and shifted the weight of the box to her other arm before agreeing; more because it would give her an opportunity to rest her arms than because she was interested in talking.

Mary doesn't meet the stereotype that most people would associate with food pantry visitors. She is in her late 30's and she works as a medical assistant in town. The job pays her fairly well, but with so many people in her house and with the increase in prices across retail sectors, Mary is finding it more difficult to make ends meet. She is falling into the same situation that many people around the country find themselves in as the dollar decreases in value and gas prices continue to rise. As the US economy continues to falter more men and women are becoming working poor, and need to rely on resources like the Rock River Valley Food Pantry who during July 2008 served 200 first time visitors.

Many of these first time visitors will be like Mary who heard about the pantry through her friends and plans on only using it this one time. But since the US economy has not been able to rally my guess is the pantry will probably see Mary again sooner than she expects. It is an interesting irony seeing someone who spends so much of her time helping people in their life and death struggles, needing help herself. When her kids begin to get really squirmy, and start asking when they are going to leave, Mary stands up and says that she has to leave. She picks up her box again and heads toward the door leaving me with a lot of questions

about what will happen to her? What will happen to the pantry? And what will happen to all of us? How will we as a society be able to support each other when everyone seems to be suffering? What happens when this ailment called hunger reaches our doorstep without any type of cure in sight?

To learn more about the work of the Rock River Valley Food Pantry visit their [website](#) or call them at ☎ (815) 965-2466 ☎

July 28, 2008

Categories: [RRVFP](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Interviews from RRVFP-Sheila

Age: 49

I didn't realize she was a mother right away, but I really should have. A multicolored headband pulled back a mass of tousled frizzy hair. She wore a light blue tang top more for comfort and ease than for fashion. The crows feet at the corners of her eyes and the smile lines on either side of her face were sure signs of someone who had spent her entire life caring for others. The bond of a mother and her children is a strange one. It's a life that's lived vicariously. At the beginning the child needs the mother, but as time goes by it seems like the mother needs the child. I guess that's why she seemed so nonplussed when she shared that one of her sons and two of her many grandkids are living back at home with her. It gives her someone to take care of and it gives her something to do in her retirement.

But lately things have been short around grandma's house. She never skips a meal and always makes sure that her babies have something to eat, but she's feeling the crunch. She finds herself stuck with same amount of money coming in from social security every month, but the costs of everything else going up. Like her rent which just went up to \$675 a month and that is without the utilities! There is a hope that things will level out again, that gas prices will go down, and that the economy will step out of this funk that it is in. But in the meantime she is stuck trying to supplement her income with a shrinking pool of resources.

She knows how fortunate she is. She has seen times like these before and so was ready for this one. I sat in awe as I listened to her talk about how to make food stretch. Whatever doubts I had about her qualifications for mother of the year melted away as she expounded her domestic advice and encouraged me to take counsel. "I just make a pot of red beans and rice and leave it sit on the stove. Whenever someone is hungry they can come and get a bowl and that will feed the whole house for a day...Instead of buying steaks you should buy a roast...Meat is just getting so expensive that's why I don't buy lunchmeat. I buy in bulk and if someone wants a sandwich they can cut the meat themselves."

While I sat and listened to her share proverb after proverb I found myself writing less and listening more. I began to fall into the blessing of her wisdom and warmth and I began to imagine what it would be like to have a grandmother like her. And when she finally said that she had to go I stood up to shake her hand and wondered why I hadn't seen the mother in her before.

My answer only came with time. I only have a memory of that day now, but what I do remember is the connection that I began to feel as she became less of a client sitting across from me in an office and more of a person just like me. I had missed it at first because I thought I was different from her, but like all good mothers' she helped me to see the connection that I never thought existed allowing me to receive her wisdom and allowing her to live through me.

To learn more about the work of the Rock River Valley Food Pantry visit their [website](#) or call them at ☎ (815) 965-2466 ☎

July 24, 2008

Categories: [RRVFP](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Interviews from RRVFP-Deborah

Age: 15

The Christian Care Center wasn't a bad place to live. It went on lockdown sometimes, but it provided her mom with enough time and resources to get back on her feet. The Care Center was also where she heard about the pantry for the first time. It has really come in handy since her uncle and two cousins came to live with her and her mother. It is nice to have her cousins around, but she is often counted on to baby sit, which is what she is doing today as she sits at the back of the lobby waiting for her number to be called. She sits slumped down in the chair with her arms crossed as she watches her cousin play over in the corner.

I'm nervous as I approach her. It is always a struggle for me to start these conversations. As I step out of the back office into the lobby I feel the discomfort moving out from my gut to the rest of my body. I don't want to make anyone uncomfortable which is why I am so glad to see her look up and smile as I approach. Softly she agrees to sit down and share her story with me. She seems shy, and doesn't really seem used to others asking about her, but when I start asking questions she settles in and her smile only seems to get bigger causing her eyes to scrunch up into small slits which hide her laughing gaze.

She goes to one of the wealthiest high schools in the district, but she doesn't feel uncomfortable going to a more affluent school. She tells me how good it is to be in a place where teachers push her to learn. Her mother is pushing her too. She is hoping that Deborah will consider a career in engineering. It makes sense because of her love for geometry, but what she really would like to do is be an actress. I struggle to keep my thoughts to myself. I want to tell her to listen to her mother. I want to tell her how uplifting it would be to see a young black woman break out of the cycle of poverty and pursue a career in a field dominated by white men. But I let the moment pass and move onto the next set of questions leaving her to dream of a life on the stage.

Maybe it's her desire to be on the stage someday, but her shy demeanor does not keep her from sharing her opinion on the city's situation. She knows for a fact that hunger is a problem in the city because she sees the way it affects her neighbors. The way she sees it, the problem is publicity. More flyers and commercials could attract attention to the problem and also inform people of the organizations like the food pantry that are trying to help. "Some people don't even know there is a pantry,

There is lots of good stuff and there are lots of good people who reach out to you and there are people here who you can reach out to." I ask Deborah if she has anything else to say and she slips back into the hesitation that she had when she first sat down. She lowers her eyes and says, "No." As I express my thanks for her openness we both stand up and head for door. She turns her head to acknowledge my words and I can't help but notice her face; two eyes scrunched into slits hiding two dancing pupils and that same big smile running from ear to ear.

To learn more about the work of the Rock River Valley Food Pantry visit their [website](#) or call them at (815) 965-2466

July 2, 2008

Categories: [RRVFP](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Day 30-Failure

Weight-162 lbs.

The day has finally arrived. I have been looking forward to this moment for a month and a half. Today is the day that the initiative comes to an end and we see if its lessons stick. For those of you who have been reading this blog faithfully...thank you. For those of you who are just tuning in...that's fine. For those of you who only read the first post and couldn't read anymore...I'm proud of you. For those of you who let this whole experience touch you...you are the reason why I did it.

Contrary to popular belief this was never about me. There were times when I tried to make it about me, and those were also the times where I felt like the biggest failure. And there were probably lots of reasons for me to feel that way. We didn't get to \$10,000. I didn't last for 30 days. The blog's readership hit its highest point at the middle of month and slowly tapered away after that. If I just looked at numbers there is the potential for me to feel like a giant failure. But numbers never really tell the true story. They are always too low or too high and they always make people out to be something they are not. I received an e-mail from a friend of mine today, who had his eyes open just wide enough to understand this. He wrote:

"Poverty is merely a word. It is a word that describes a financial situation, a condition of living, but it does nothing to describe the people found there within. Poverty is what you see in statistics and uncomfortable commercials showing you images of starvation. It is something that people live, something that people suffer, but it is not something that people are. It is a sight to which our initial response can only be, 'How terrible.' But, when in and among the life and company of those who suffer from poverty, and when the physical conditions are no longer allowed to define their state of being, poverty is the last thing that is felt. Life abounds. Hope, and faith and spirit radiate, and it is all a spectacle to which one's initial response can only be, 'How wonderful. How truly wonderful.'"

To have our eyes open just wide enough to see the beauty of the other, to have our heart softened enough to feel our own power, and to have our mind clear enough to understand the course we must take; these are the reasons why I began this journey. I have been blessed enough to hear so many of you tell me that this thing has got them thinking that I have to realize that the initiative wasn't a failure at all, because it was

never about me, it was about you. The success or failure of this endeavor cannot be measured today. It will be measured in the years to come when I hear about what you are doing to end global hunger.

It is now time for me to let go of the initiative, by giving it to you. It is not just my responsibility anymore. It is now **our** responsibility. Consider the impact that initiative has had on you. Reply to this post with questions it raised for you, stories about how you engaged the issue, suggestions for the next time I attempt to do something like this, really anything you think is pertinent will be welcomed. I'm looking forward to reading the responses, but more than that I'm looking forward to seeing God's kingdom come through all of us.

July 1, 2008

Categories: [Uncategorized](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Day 29-The Wedding Banquet



Weight-160.5 lbs.

Yesterday I watched a man get arrested. His name is John and he was drunk. After causing a scene at church he was escorted out of the building and asked to leave the premises. Since the church used to be a strip mall the premises are big, and it wasn't long before

John found himself wandering into another part of the church. Security was called and when John refused to leave the premises again, the police were called. I sat and talked to John while we all waited for the police car to arrive

I saw John again this morning when I went to have breakfast with my family. He was standing a few storefronts down from the restaurant, but instead of going up to talk to him I avoided him, because I wasn't sure what I should do with him. I couldn't take him in with my family, they wouldn't understand. If I was by myself or with a friend maybe but not with my family. Fortunately for me, John was gone by the time I walked out of the restaurant an hour later. I'm not sure if I will get to see him again. I hope that isn't our last interaction.

Jesus tells a story about a rich man who prepares a banquet for his friends, but when he invites them they all RSVP in the negative and so the man is left with a whole lot of food and no one to eat. The rich man then implores his servants to go out to the highways and back alleys and invite anyone they could find no matter how poor, and soon the banquet hall was filled to overflowing with the lowest of the low: the drunks, the drug addicts, the developmentally disabled and the poor. All of these people soon filled the hall and filled it with much merriment because of their deep appreciation for the gift.

Tonight my boss got married and it reminded me of Jesus' story. What does one of the best chefs in Rockford serve at a wedding reception. The answer in Paul's case was to get as many different caterers and friends as possible to cook. 4 suckling pigs, 4 pans of paiae, a creme puff tower, and a whole table full of seared yellow fin tuna. The serving tables stretched from one end of the ballroom to the other. It would be an understatement to say that folks were impressed.

The similarities between the story and tonight's wedding are these ...there was a lot of food at both of these parties and my guess is there is going to be a lot of leftovers. But that is where the similarities stop. While Paul was able to fill his table with his friends, the man in the story was not. But what is even more important was how the rich man in the story expanded his table to accommodate even those who did not originally belong at the feast. It raises an important question, how big is your table?

We all set up feast of our time, talent and treasures. But the question we need to ask is how big our table is. My table should have been big enough this morning to seat John, but instead I took out the center leaf of the table shrinking it down to only those who I am comfortable with. We are like the rich man. Each day we set out a banquet. Some days our friends respond, other days they don't but the poor do. Then again there are those days when everyone wants to come to the banquet. The thing is not to stop putting on banquets, but rather it is important to remember the size of our table and find ways to expand. So take a moment sit back and ask yourself, "How big is my table"?

June 30, 2008

Categories: [Uncategorized](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Day 28-"Rich"

Weight-162 lbs.

I was watching a DVD the other day called "Rich". It was recorded by a guy named Rob Bell who is a pastor at Mars Hill Community Church in Grand Rapids, MI. In the video he was talking about how Christ calls us to be generous because we have been blessed by God. You see in the Bible there is this understanding that money, time and energy are not ours...they are God's; and because of that all of it is supposed to be used for God's glory.

Toward the end of the video Bell mentions that this is not a call for a one time donation, but instead it is asking God is asking us to give each day of our money, time and energy. And as I was driving in the car yesterday I started thinking about what this would look like in my own life and I was almost giddy with the possibility. The excitement continued to grow when I started thinking about doing this every hour of every day, then every minute, then every second. What would it look like if we could really set out to do this and do it. It would be outstanding! The world would be such a changed place.

But the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. It begins with making a decision to be generous with your money, time and energy today maybe even right now. We are close to the end of the initiative and soon we will be closing down the donations page. Consider [making](#)

[a donation](#) and giving the gift of Heifer hope to one family that you have never met, but desperately needs your help.

June 29, 2008

Categories: [Things I Can Do?](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Day 27-Lessons in Futility

Weight-162 lbs.

It wasn't that I was frustrated or angry. I wasn't even exasperated. I knew it was going to happen eventually, something like it always does in large scale projects like Sharefest. For the past two weeks Heartland Community Church has been working to renovate three public schools in Rockford, IL. The project is massive in scope and requires a lot of volunteers, and I got to be one. My job was to clean the tile in four bathrooms. This tedious process seemed pointless because the tile already seemed pretty clean, but it was what was asked for.

So I wondered a little bit about the purpose of my tile cleaning today when I was sent into the same bathrooms to sand and power wash all the stalls. It was while I was working on one really nasty stall that I looked down and noticed the pool of dirty water at my feet and realized that someone was going to have to go through and clean all the tile again.

The task of ending the cycle of poverty is much the same I think. It is futile to think that we are going to end global hunger. We can fight it, and believe we have the power to defeat it. Sadly, it is just like the tile in the bathroom. Even though we do something that we think is going to help, there will be someone coming in right behind us dirtying it all up again. And the worst part about it is, the person is often ourselves

But it is not our job to just give up. I was made, and I believe we all were made, to give glory to God by working our butts off for the good of his people. It is the task that draws us closer to our true purpose. Jesus tells his disciples, "You will always have the poor" which is a true statement. I think the only reason we have the poor always with us is so that we will

always have something to work for, so that we will always be a people of purpose even in the midst of our own self produced failure, the failure which draws us to God and to his glory.

June 29, 2008

Categories: [Uncategorized](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

Day 26-The Cynic

Weight-159 lbs.

I was back at the pantry today conducting more interviews. I was nervous again starting off. It is hard to approach people and ask them why they are there. It is even harder to explain what I am doing there. But as the afternoon went on I began to develop a groove. As clients would be called up to the counter, and their eligibility checked was being checked in the database I would introduce myself and ask if they would sit down with me for a few minutes and share a little bit about how the pantry has helped them. Most people agreed to sit down with me although some were pressed for time.

One of the women that I asked who couldn't sit down with me because of a prior engagement had just lost her house to the floods. Another woman had to go and pick up her kids from daycare. Another woman had carpooled in and while she was able to sit down with me for a few minutes, she had to cut things short when her ride was leaving.

It was great to talk to people, even though it was difficult to be able to get a full picture in such a short amount of time. But the staff and volunteers at the pantry helped to flesh things out for me a little more. Some of them were cynical because they had seen the way that folks who use the pantry abuse the system. Although when you talked to them more about the pantry itself they could not say enough good things about the good work that it was doing. I really appreciated the frankness of our conversation and because most of them were, are, or will be social workers in the future they were able to intelligently identify the problem, it causes, and possible solutions while still honoring the facts that hunger is a tough thing to beat and that simple solutions are probably the worst ones.

The director of the Pantry, Kim, sat down with me at the end of the day and we recapped everything that I had seen and talked to folks about. Eventually the question came up, about what you do with people who abuse the system. And even if they don't abuse the system what if they just have poor spending habits. As I spoke with Kim I began to wonder if part of our problem is that our Midwest American decency prevents us from saying the hard thing that could really be useful in pulling them out of poverty. Kim agreed with me that accountability is important. But then she pointed out something really important about pantry, and something that should be really important to us all. "We gave up holding people accountable, so we can feed them."

Whether right or not the Rock River Valley food pantry is taking the call to feed the hungry seriously. Even if the cynic in you says that it is all wrong, what other choice do we have?

June 28, 2008

The Jubilee Act passes the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Yesterday the [Jubilee Act](#) passed the Senate Foreign Relations committee! This bill works for immediate debt cancellation for 26 countries who need it most to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Debt cancellation is one of the many tools that global economists have identified in helping pull struggling countries out of a cycle of poverty that leaves them crippled and unable to provide for themselves. It also asks the U.S. to provide accountability for those countries laboring under agonizing debt making the program more sustainable.

There were some changes made to the Senate version of the bill but they are in the areas of stronger language on vulture funds, and a Sense of the Congress that the United States should fully fund its prior commitments to the International Financial Institutions.

What's next for the Jubilee Act? It must now be considered and passed by the full Senate before it can go to the President and be signed into law. First, it will probably go on the Unanimous Consent calendar, as legislative days are so limited the Senate does not have time to debate and amend everything on the floor.

One Senator can block the bill and stop all the progress we've made in the House and Senate. Please keep an eye on your email- we'll let you know who is blocking and when. If that Senator is from your state, please be ready to call, email, and write a letter to the editor to ask him/her to support this important legislation and cancel the debt! Please be ready to ask your friends, family, congregation or community to do the same.

For more information on the Jubilee Act or Jubilee USA's new campaigns, go to www.jubileeusa.org.

June 26, 2008

Categories: [Resources](#) . . Author: [30dayhungryman](#) . Comments: [Leave a Comment](#)

[Previous page](#) [Next Page](#) »

Categories

- [Heifer International](#)
- [Resources](#)
- [RRVFP](#)
- [Things I Can Do?](#)
- [Uncategorized](#)

Archives

- [July 2008](#)
- [June 2008](#)
- [May 2008](#)

Blogroll

- [Bread for The World](#)
- [Heifer International](#)
- [International Hunger Facts](#)
- [ONE Campaign](#)
- [Rock River Valley Food Pantry](#)
- [U.S. Hunger Facts](#)

Donations

- [Donations Page](#)

Calendar

October 2010						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

« Jul

Search

Search

Theme: Neo-Sapien by [WP Designer](#).
[Blog at WordPress.com](#).